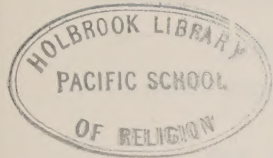


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the WORLD ALLIANCE of YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS
the WORLD'S YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION
the WORLD'S STUDENT CHRISTIAN FEDERATION
the WORLD COUNCIL of CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The aim of the Ecumenical Press Service is to keep its readers informed of trends of thought and opinion in and about the Churches and Christian movements. It is therefore not to be held responsible for opinions expressed in its news items.

No. 9

Fifteenth Year

March 5, 1948

Amsterdam Special

"Concerns of the Churches"

The Churches have many pressing "concerns", but the Amsterdam Assembly cannot grapple with them all. Four important concerns, however, will be considered by a special Amsterdam Committee and then presented to the delegates for action. These "concerns" are not those of any one Church or area of our world, but are those of many Churches in many areas. They are: "The Christian attitude to the Jews" - "The life and work of women in the Church" - "Lay-training" and "Reconstruction and Inter-Church Aid". The latter will deal also with the refugee and displaced persons' problem.

Two years ago the World Council of Churches asked Mrs. Samuel McCrea Cavert to initiate a study of the "Life and work of Women in the Church". Correspondence was carried on with various Churches in many lands. The results have been most revealing and helpful. This work grew to such proportions that Miss Olive Wyon was appointed to collaborate with Mrs. Cavert in this study and in the preparation of a report for Amsterdam.

Lay-training is one of the more recent and hopeful movements within the Church. The Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, now in its second year, is pioneering in a programme of lay-training which cannot help but have vital significance in the life of the Churches and particularly in the life of those who have the privilege of this training experience. "Iona" in Scotland, "Church and World" in Holland, the "Evangelical Academies" in Germany are further efforts in this field, and signs of the new interest in the preparation of lay people, not only for church work, as such, but for vital Christian witness in their various secular callings. By no means will the "concern" of reconstruction, with the allied problem of refugees and displaced persons, be passé by the time of the Assembly. The refugees and D.P.s situation grows more acute as time goes on. People cannot remain homeless and insecure for long without creating for themselves and others still greater problems. As to the "concern" of the "Christian attitude to the Jews", the experience of the past few years in particular demands that the Churches make crystal clear their attitude in this matter.

E.P.S.Geneva

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GREAT BRITAINTribute to Mahatma Gandhi

On February 17, an intercession service for the peoples of India and Pakistan was held in Westminster Abbey, London.

Sir Stafford Cripps paid a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi, "who stands out as a great example of spiritual strength which should help to guide us, as well as his own people, in the difficult years that lie ahead". "I know of no other man in our time", Sir Stafford Cripps went on, "or indeed in recent history, who so fully and convincingly demonstrated the power of the spirit over material things. May not the whole world learn from his life something of fundamental value - that it is idle to try to save ourselves from destruction by the use of force, and that our greatest weapon of salvation is the supreme and redeeming power of love."

The Rev. Don, Dean of Westminster, said that in this hour of trial through which the peoples of India and Pakistan are passing, "we share their sorrow in the death of the great leader so suddenly taken from them and we join with them in detestation of the deed that brought to an end so noble a life. We shall pray that the policy of non-violence and cooperation for which Mahatma Gandhi gave his life may increasingly prevail, to the avoidance of bloodshed and confusion and to the proclamation of mutual forbearance and goodwill; and we shall pray that we, who profess the name of Christ may, together with the peoples of India and Pakistan, learn from his example that the way of peace is the only sure road to freedom and prosperity."

E.P.S. Geneva

EGYPTJoint Action by the Non-Muslin Communities

We hear from a correspondent in Cairo:

For nearly four years the Christian and Jewish communities in Egypt have been perturbed by repeated efforts of the Egyptian Government to press forward legislation for the modification of the non-Muslin Community Courts. For centuries each of these Courts has been competent to decide on all questions of personal status (e.g. marriage, divorce, separation, inheritance and matters dependent thereon) for members of its particular community, just as the Muslim (Sharia) Court has similar competence for Muslims. The trend of recent legislation has been in the direction of reducing the powers of the non-Muslin Courts, and of transferring their authority either to the Muslim or the civil Courts, while leaving the powers of the Muslim Courts in questions of personal status untouched. In particular, the Christians and the Jews protest against the transfer of cases from their Courts to the Muslim Courts, in the event of one of the parties professing faith in Islam. They rightly maintain that the "law of contract" should be observed in this, as in other, spheres of jurisdiction.

On January 30, 1948, H.B. the Coptic Patriarch invited the heads of all the Christian and Jewish Communities to a meeting at the Patriarchate to discuss the situation. All of them accepted, and so a unique meeting was held, with more than forty persons present. A document was drawn up protesting against the Government's Bill on the Community Courts and also against a recent law on the subject of the civil registration of marriages and divorces, and after receiving the signature of the heads of all twelve Communities, was submitted to the King, and

to the Prime Minister and other officials. The effect of this joint protest was immediate, as the Government promised to await the proposals of the non-Muslim Communities, before proceeding further with its Bill on the Community Courts, and also to suspend those articles of the law on registration, to which objection was raised.

E.P.S.Geneva

UNITED STATES

Petition against "Genocide" to the United Nations

On February 5, 1948 a petition was signed at Lake Success, calling upon the United Nations "to adopt a treaty against 'genocide', which would outlaw the destruction of religious, racial and national groups". This petition was signed by 100 Protestant, Roman Catholic and Jewish leaders, and was formally presented to the United Nations by the National Conference of Christians and Jews. The petition was also signed by Mr. Charles P. Taft on behalf of the Federal Council of Churches.

Mr. Taft said that he was confident that the "Protestant Churches related to the Federal Council would welcome action by the Economic and Social Council, in the preparation of a draft convention against 'genocide'. This would be a significant step towards the fulfilment of those human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, which are embodied in the Charter of the United Nations". E.P.S.Geneva

ARGENTINE

No Official Restrictions Against Protestants

Dr B. Foster Stockwell, President of the United Theological Seminary in Buenos Aires, during his stay in the United States denied the rumours that the Peron Government was restricting the activities of the Protestant Churches in the Argentine. "So far as official restrictions are concerned, Protestants have complete liberty in the Argentine for all their work". This does not mean that Protestants in general are in sympathy with the Peron Government.

Dr Stockwell emphasised that the prospects for the work of the Evangelical Churches in the Argentine, and in all the Latin American countries, were very favourable. "The increasing number of young men and women presenting themselves for Christian service is encouraging". Dr Stockwell reported that there are about 250,000 Protestants in the Argentine, out of a total population of 16,000,000.

E.P.S. Geneva

INDIA

Religious Education

"If national education contains no religious instruction, there will be no appreciation of moral values nor moulding of character on human lines", said the Minister for Education, the Hon. Maulana Azad, at the Session of the Central Advisory Board of Education recently held in New Delhi. "Our present difficulties, unlike those of Europe or America, are not created by materialists but by religious fanatics. If we want to overcome them the solution lies not in rejecting religious instruction, but in imparting it on sound and healthy lines.

"It is obvious that millions of Indians will refuse to see their children brought up in an irreligious atmosphere. What will be the consequence if the Government undertakes to impart purely secular education? Naturally people will

try to provide religious education for their children through private sources. But as you know, not only in the villages but even in the cities, religious education is entrusted to uneducated teachers to whom religions means nothing but bigotry. There is no scope for a broad, liberal outlook. If we wish to safeguard the intellectual life of our country, it is essential that we do not entrust elementary religious instruction to private people. A National Government cannot shirk its responsibility for religious education. It is its primary duty to mould the growing mind of the nation on the right lines. In India we cannot have intellectual training without religion."

The National Christian Council of India have noticed this statement with much interest. They are watching the situation carefully and are grateful for every tendency on the part of the Government to grant the Indian Christians religious freedom in education and worship.

E.P.S. Geneva

HUNGARY

The Church and Evangelisation

The Ecumenical Youth Committee which includes ten youth organisations from the Reformed, Lutheran, Methodist and Baptist Churches, recently organised an evangelisation day in the streets of Budapest. The Press Service of the Protestant Churches of Hungary reports that posters were put up reading as follows: "You have forgotten something. Take it, it is free. Forty evangelists from four different Protestant Churches are coming to talk to you about Jesus Christ." Thousands of tracts were distributed by the young people. In one of the churches in Budapest continuous services were held from 8 in the morning till 8 in the evening and were very well attended. Some people stayed and heard three or four sermons, one after the other.

The Hungarian Ecumenical Council is also about to organise an evangelism campaign in Budapest, and is preparing for it through prayer. Posters and pamphlets will be distributed. A week's retreat will be held from March 28 till April 3, followed by meetings for evangelism in the eighteen churches in the city. A week of Thanksgiving will take place from April 19 to 24 in each parish and will bring the evangelism campaign to a close. The Reformed, Lutheran, Methodist and Baptist Churches, and the Salvation Army, are taking part in this campaign.

E.P.S. Geneva

UNITED STATES

Inter-Faith Help to D.P.s

Protestants, Roman Catholics and Jews will be represented on a Joint Council on the Resettlement of Displaced Persons organised in New York to facilitate the reception and relocation in the United States of Europe's homeless of all faiths. Representation on the Council will be through three national welfare organisations, which have already begun to cooperate on a country-wide basis. They are the National Catholic Resettlement Council, the Committee on Displaced Persons of Church World Service (Protestant coordinating relief agency) and the United Service for New Americans, Jewish agency.

Actual operation of the programme of the Council will depend on passage by Congress of legislation to admit an increased number of displaced persons, preferably on a non-quota basis. Pending government legislation the three re-

ligious agencies in the Council, cooperating with State and local church bodies, are conducting a survey to discover how many displaced persons can be accommodated in various localities. The chairman of the Church World Service committee announced that CWS is conducting its own fact-finding survey in 633 local communities.

E.P.S. Geneva

GERMANY

The De-Nazification Question

The declarations of the Churches on the question of de-nazification have aroused discussion everywhere, especially the pronouncement of the church leaders in Hessen-Nassau (see E.P.S. No. 7). The church leaders of Hessen-Nassau therefore feel obliged to protest against the misinterpretation of that pronouncement, and to give the following explanation:

"The Message to the Churches was addressed by the church leaders as a spiritual message to the Evangelical Churches. We have no intention of imposing any kind of obligations nor restrictions upon the Church. In reply to the assertion that this Message incites people to disobey the laws of the State, we must explain that in the past the Evangelical Church was not afraid of disobeying the State, if its ordinances were clearly contrary to God's commandment.

"It is, however, quite wrong to regard the Message as a challenge of this kind; such an interpretation is quite contrary to the sense. Our desire was rather to urge the church members to examine their consciences, and to cease volunteering to carry out certain functions in connection with the administration of the law of liberation. Moreover, we prohibited pastors from voluntary cooperation of this kind, which are incompatible with their office in the Church. It is therefore a question of giving up certain civic rights, but not of preventing people from fulfilling any of their civic duties.

"We will publish the material before us - which shows our statements to be in no way exaggerated but extremely moderate - as soon as a possibility appears of their being regarded dispassionately and objectively."

E.P.S. Geneva

GERMANY

Formation of an Evangelical Church Assembly

The Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany has published a decree concerning the formation of a Church Assembly. This is to decide the final constitution of the Evangelical Church (basic order). Eighty members of the Church Assembly are to be elected by the Synods of the member Churches, twenty-five are to be appointed by the Council; in addition there will be one delegate from every member Church and the twelve members of the Council. Not more than half the members of the Church Assembly may be theologians.

E.P.S. Geneva

SAAR

New Order of the Evangelical Church

The News Service of the Evangelical Church in Alsace - Lorraine published an article on February 26, on "The New Order of the Evangelical Church in the Saar" stating that this Church stands on the threshold of a new beginning in the management of its affairs. "The Church has been assured of complete freedom in choosing its leaders. Reconstruction will not be arranged from above by bishops or officials, but from below, by the church members."

For centuries the Christians in the Saar have belonged to the Lutheran form of confession corresponding to the French branch of the Church of the Augsburg Confession, especially in Alsace; but owing to the church struggles, especially against National Socialism, they have some very outstanding characteristics.

E.P.S. Geneva

U.S.S.R.

The Moscow Patriarch and the other Orthodox Churches

Metropolitan Nikolai of Krutitsky recently granted an interview to a representative of the Tass Agency in Moscow, from which the following questions and answers are quoted. The motive for this interview was an article published in the Paris paper, "Le Monde Illustré" which stated that Patriarch Alexis intended to assume control of the Orthodox Churches in the Balkan countries and to take over the inheritance of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople.

In reply to the question whether the head of the Russian Orthodox Church really claimed the first place in the Orthodox Church as a whole, thus superseding the Patriarch of Constantinople, Metropolitan Nikolai replied:

"The Patriarch of Moscow, who is the head of the autocephalous Orthodox Russian Church, respects the independence of the Orthodox sister Churches. Neither Patriarch Alexis nor his predecessor, the late Patriarch Sergius, had any intention of assuming control over the Orthodox Churches or of placing themselves in the position of the Ecumenical Patriarch. The universal Orthodox Church represents a federation of autocephalous Churches with equal rights. The Patriarch of Moscow adheres strictly to this historical-canonical fact."

Question:- "The 'Monde Illustré' declares that the Moscow Patriarch had urged Metropolitan Gavriilo of Serbia - through a representative - to surrender the independence of the Serbian Church."

Answer:- "The Patriarch of Moscow has not had any kind of negotiations with the independent Serbian Church concerning any annexation by the Russian Church, nor concerning the surrender of its independence."

Question:- "What is the position concerning the question of the Pan Orthodox Church Council that was to be called to Moscow, but which Patriarch Maximos of Constantinople, the Patriarch of Alexandria and the Synod of the Greek Church refused to attend?"

Answer:- "Patriarch Alexius did not wish to call a pan Orthodox Church Assembly, but a fraternal meeting of the heads of the Orthodox Churches to consider questions in which all the Churches are interested today. This meeting has not been cancelled, but has been postponed until the summer of 1948, at the request of some Churches who wanted more time for preparation. This year is the 500th anniversary of the independence of the Russian Orthodox Church. The Patriarch of Moscow decided to hold this conference of the Orthodox Churches at the same time as the jubilee celebrations."

E.P.S. Geneva

Annual Meeting of the World Council of Churches Refugee
Commission

The annual meeting opened in Paris on February 26, in the headquarters of the Cimade under the chairmanship of Rev. Henry Carter, C.B.E., who was heartily welcomed after his recovery from serious illness.

The conference was opened by devotions, conducted by Pastor Marc Boegner. Amongst others present were Dr W.A. Visser 't Hooft, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, the Very Rev. Dr J. Hutchison Cockburn, Director of the Reconstruction Department, Dr S.C. Michelfelder (Lutheran World Federation), Dr Robbins W. Barstow (Church World Service), Propst H. Høgsbro (Denmark), Pastor H. Grüber (Berlin). Observers from kindred organisations were present.

The President of the French Republic, M. Vincent Auriol, received some of the members of the Commission in audience at the Elysée.

The closing devotions of the meeting were held in an ecumenical service in the church de l'Etoile, in which Dr Visser 't Hooft preached the sermon whilst Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant members of the ecumenical brotherhood participated in the service.

The deliberations of the conference had to deal with the very serious aspects of the problems of the more than 15 millions of refugees existing in Europe and abroad. The possibilities of the Churches to give substantial help are limited and there was a strong feeling that the whole problem needs a joint effort not only of the Churches but of all governments concerned, be it in the countries of distress in Europe or be it in the receiving countries in Europe and abroad.

It is a hopeful sign of progress that cooperation of three great bodies in the field is now a fact: the World Council of Churches Refugee Commission under its new constitution, is a working fellowship of the Refugee Division of the World Council's Reconstruction Department, the Lutheran World Federation, and Church World Service. The agreements which were prepared in October 1947 were confirmed and the common work can start.

A standing committee consisting of members of these three bodies and three additional members of European countries was appointed with Rev. Henry Carter as Chairman, Dr R.W. Barstow as Vice Chairman and Rev. Elfan Rees, the Executive Officer of the World Council of Churches Refugee Commission, as secretary.

The serious problem of new refugees and the daily accession of more to their number was the subject of serious study by a Sub-Commission. A special statement on this issue was approved by the Commission. This will be published shortly.

There were also most important discussions on the difficult question of confessional provision for refugees in countries of resettlement, on which the Commission issued an important and unanimous finding.

The question of the situation of the Hebrew Christians in the different countries, especially Germany, was discussed and full cooperation of all organisations concerned was arranged.

A full report of the conference's dealings with the denominational problems and problems of new refugees will be published in one of the next issues of E.P.S.
E.P.S. Geneva

GERMANYGreetings from Siberia

A German who has returned home from Russia has brought with him "Greetings from Germans imprisoned in Russia to their Church at home" (Evangelische Gemeindeblatt für den Kirchenbezirk Urach).

"On the upper reaches of the Irtysh, near the Mongolian frontier, lies Leninogorsk. The centre of the town consists of lead-works and factories, in which the German prisoners are working. In their camp they have a church - a Church without a building - but none the less a little Christian community helping, strengthening and comforting one another and trying to follow the way of faith in the midst of the temptations of captivity. Among the prisoners there are some former pastors, and these hold services for their comrades in the evenings after their day's work together.

"What do these Christians want you to do for them?... They would like to read the same Bible lesson in the morning as you, to pray 'with the whole of Christ's Church on earth' and to hold their services 'at the same time as you do at home'. They are longing to know what is happening in their Church in Germany. Whether the sufferings of the last few years have created a spirit of repentance. Whether people are thankful for their daily bread, and for the fact that they are free on Sundays and can go to Church. Whether they are obedient to God after this terrible judgment that has fallen upon them. Whether the Church will now be united in brotherly fellowship, humility and obedience. And whether beyond the boundaries of the national state, the unity of the whole Church will become visible as a Communion of Saints, a unity of all Christians above the abyss of guilt and suffering in gratitude to God, Who has forgiven all our sins." E.P.S. Geneva

UNITED STATESProtestantism's Evangelistic Programmes

Dr Jesse M. Bader, executive secretary of the Department of Evangelism of the Federal Council of Churches, declared that plans are now under way for a 15-month programme of evangelism beginning in the autumn of 1949 with all denominations uniting in concentrated effort.
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